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Undergraduate Psychology Programs in Argentina: Bibliometrical Analysis of Texts Listed in the Syllabi of 14 Advanced Courses at the National University of San Luis

Sebastian Vazquez-Ferrero
Romina Colombo

Universidad Nacional de San Luis, Argentina

Undergraduate programs in Psychology in Argentina are characterized by a predominance of a psychoanalytic approach in most courses along the whole program, which lasts at least five years. There is only one university in Argentina in which students have to choose between a psychoanalytic or a cognitive education and training for the last two years of this program, involving different advanced courses. In this paper we present findings based on a study of contents and bibliographical references included in the syllabus of each of the specific advanced courses of psychoanalytic and cognitive approach. The analyses are based on both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Studies related to undergraduate education in Psychology have increased in the last years, not only in the United States (Belar, Nelson & Wasik, 2003; Benjamin, 2001; Brewer, 2006; Perlman & McCann, 2005) and European Union (Buela-Casal, Gutiérrez-Martínez & Peiró, 2005; Lunt, 2002; Peiró & Lunt, 2002; Wilpert, 2002) but also in Latin America (Sierra & Bermúdez, 2005; Vilanova, 1993) and from an international point of view in the whole world (Karandashev & McCarthy, 2006).

In Argentina, the first degree in the field of psychology is not a bachelor in science or arts, with majors or minors, but a specific degree named "psychologist" or, in Spanish, "*licenciado en psicología*". Probably, it has more resemblance with a Master's degree because of the time it takes to complete the degree (between 5-6 years). While only a bachelor's degree, the degree does qualify a person for professional practice, including psychotherapy (Klappenbach, 2004).

In Argentina there are only eight undergraduate programs in psychology at national universities (Klappenbach, 2004). One of them, for example, requires 33 16-week courses, the same for all the students. Besides these, there are two groups of seven courses and a student would need to decide which group to take based on his or her preference for the psychoanalytical or the cognitive theoretical approaches. This university offers the only undergraduate program in psychology in Argentina that provides this option. In the other Argentine universities, there is a predominance of a

psychoanalytical approach only (Klappenbach, 2006; Plotkin, 2003; Vilanova, 1993).

The psychology courses in Argentine tend not to use a single textbook or handbook, but use selected paragraphs or chapters of textbooks, among other texts. Each course has 90 hours of class meetings, and students have to take 4 or 5 courses simultaneously.

The goal of this research study is to examine the reading assignments in psychology courses at the university where the students are given the option to choose either the psychodynamic or the cognitive theoretical approach as their focus of study. More specifically, the study evaluates psychology education and compares the number of pages of the required reading assignments and the other recommended readings in these 2 groups of courses to the student's choice towards each theoretical orientation.

Method

We analyzed the syllabi that belonged to the seven courses in the psychodynamic theoretical approach and the seven courses that belonged to the cognitive theoretical approach. Each syllabus was retrieved from the University's website. From each syllabus we proceeded to classify the required reading assignments and the other recommended reading assignments and the other recommended readings in different categories: books, chapters of books, journal articles, complete issues of a journal, selected pages, other

nonpublished texts supplied by the instructor.

Considering that the texts listed in the syllabi of psychology courses in Argentina are usually classified in two great categories, required reading assignments (*bibliografía obligatoria*) and other recommended readings (*bibliografía complementaria*), our study takes into account these categories as well.

After the classification of these readings, we then proceeded to establish the quantitative analysis of the exact number of texts for each category. In the second stage of the study, we established the exact number of pages of each text. To estimate the amount of pages for each text, we searched for them in the Central Library of the University, the National Library of Argentina, and other sources, including bookstores and other libraries. Although the size and amount of content of each page may not be the same for every resource, considering the aim of this study we do not consider this possibility as a limitation.

Results and Discussion

The aim of this research was to find the relation between the amount of pages of both the required reading assignments (*bibliografía obligatoria*) and the other recommended readings (*bibliografía complementaria*), and the theoretical orientation chosen by the student.

Table 1: Amount of texts found and missing, for each theoretical approach

	Texts found	Texts missing
Psychoanalytic approach	455	231
Cognitive approach	269	12

Our study revealed, first of all, that the classification system of readings in these syllabi, as well as in other psychology programs in Argentina, is strongly different from the classification systems in undergraduate programs in other parts of the world.

It is also interesting to note that some texts could not be found using the previously mentioned search procedure because they were not referenced in the syllabus following the *Publication Manual's* list of references style (American Psychological Association, 2001) or the references were not clear enough to allow a search or in a few cases the publishers themselves were unknown.

For the psychoanalytic approach, near one third of the total of texts listed in the syllabi was not found, whereas for the cognitive approach this amount was less than 5% (see Table 1). Based on this finding, it could be concluded that one out of three texts in psychoanalytical education in this undergraduate program is not readily available for the public. It is interesting to compare these results with the classical state of Ziman (1976) that scientific communication is at the heart of scientific method, that is, scientific knowledge is always published knowledge.

Well known standard recommendations state that for one hour of class meeting, students are required to take another two hours of reading and studying (Clump, Bauer & Bradley, 2004). The class meetings of the seven courses for each theoretical approach add up to 630 hours (each course has 90 hours of class meetings, along one 16-week semester). Thus, it is possible to estimate that the required hours of reading are 1260.

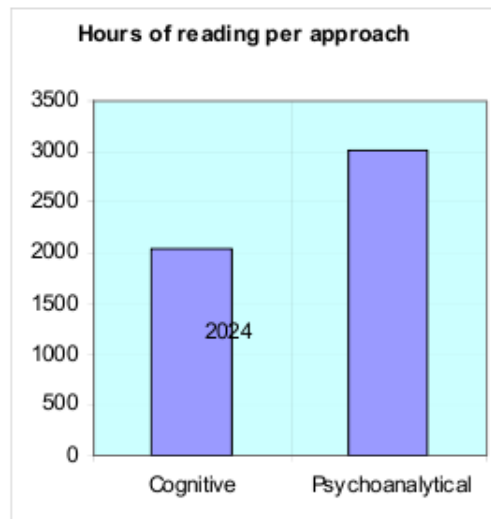
Although many studies pointed out that individual differences affect reading and processing speed (Ehri & Wilce, 1983; Eldrege, 2005; McCrudden, Schraw & Hartley, 2006; Sappington, Kinsey & Munsayac, 2002), but for general skilled readers as college students are supposed to be, it is estimated that the average reading speed is around 260 words per minute. Taking into account the different sizes of print in the analyzed texts, we found that the amount of words per page of text is usually between 300-600 words, that is an average of 450 words per page. Considering that these data would mean that the student takes an average of 1 minute and 43 seconds to read each page, that would be 34.9 pages read per hour.

With these findings in mind, according to the amount of pages of the texts listed in the syllabus of each approach (see Table 2), students would have to read for 2054 hours in the cognitive approach and 3027 hours in the psychoanalytical one (see Table 3), instead of the 1260 hours that the educational standards recommend.

Table 2: Required and recommended reading pages, for each theoretical approach

	Required reading pages	Recommended reading pages	Total reading pages
Psychoanalytic approach	71749	34068	105817
Cognitive approach	36039	35783	71822

Table 3: Amount of hours of required reading, for each theoretical approach



Taking into account the two types of readings, it could be concluded that the cognitive approach has the same amount of pages for required readings and recommended texts, and the psychoanalytic approach considers a 68% of their total amount of pages as required readings. These results might deserve further research.

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Please send all correspondences regarding this article to
 Sebastián Vázquez Ferrero at
sebastianvazquezferrero@yahoo.com.ar